



# YELLOWSTONE FOREVER

## YELLOWSTONE BACKCOUNTRY SKILLS

### Itinerary & Details

FIELD SEMINAR – SUMMER 2024

**INSTRUCTORS:** Orville Bach, Ed.D., Debra Dirksen, Ph.D., & John Dirksen, M.S.

#### **INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHIES:**

Orville Bach has worked for the National Park Service as a Seasonal Interpretive Ranger for 47 years, mostly in Yellowstone, and is currently serving as a backcountry volunteer and Fire Lookout in Yellowstone. He is the author of *Exploring the Yellowstone Backcountry*, *Tracking the Spirit of Yellowstone: Recollections of Thirty-One Years as a Seasonal Ranger*, and *Reflections from Yellowstone and Beyond*. He has traveled Yellowstone's backcountry during all seasons, including an 18-day wilderness ski trip through the park.

John and Debra Dirksen have spent almost every summer in Yellowstone's backcountry for the past 40+ years, often serving as volunteers. The two met at Old Faithful Inn in 1984 and married 8 months later. They have had many Yellowstone backcountry adventures in the following 38 summers in Yellowstone. Dr. Debra Dirksen is the Dean of Education at the University of Western New Mexico. She is well known for her backcountry cooking skills and style. John Dirksen has taught classes in backpacking and has spent 55 summers backpacking the trails of the Yellowstone ecosystem and many trails of surrounding forest lands. The summer of his 73rd birthday, he reached a total of 25,000 miles backpacking in Yellowstone!

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:** This course is activity **level 4** and students enrolled in this course are expected to be active participants. Be prepared to hike up to 8 miles per day, at a brisk pace, comfortably, with climbs up to 1500 feet on dirt trails. Loose rocks, uneven footing, and off-trail hiking are possible. Good coordination is recommended.

*\*All field activities will be conducted as a group. If participants cannot meet the activity level expectations during the program, they may be restricted from participation in daily outings. Program itineraries or activities will not be altered to accommodate participants who cannot meet the expectations of the stated activity level.*

**LOCATION:** Lamar Buffalo Ranch – Yellowstone National Park, WY

**PROGRAM DATES & TIMES:** The program begins at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 22, 2024, and goes through Monday, June 24, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

**LODGING CHECK-IN & CHECK-OUT:** Lodging check-in begins at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 22, 2024 and lodging check-out is at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 25, 2024.

**MEALS:** This course is not catered. Participants will need to bring their own food; lunch should be able to travel in the field.

**For general information about the facilities, preparation for classes, what to expect, cancellation policies, and more, please see the [Lamar Buffalo Ranch - Summer General Information](#) document.**

## PROGRAM ITINERARY

This course will introduce you to the skills necessary for exploring and enjoying Yellowstone's backcountry. You will learn about the proper gear and equipment, how to navigate by map and compass, hiking and camping in grizzly country, no-trace camping techniques, the proper use of a campfire where permitted, cooking techniques, and you'll also receive an introduction to some delicious meals courtesy of your camp cook extraordinaire, Dr. Dirksen.

The itinerary is designed to take advantage of the best opportunities in the park, but may be adjusted to adapt to weather conditions, wildlife activity, holidays, and road construction.

*The details and timing of the agenda are subject to change.*

### Day 1

#### Welcome

The program starts with an evening orientation. You will get to know one another and be introduced to the program. Throughout the evening, the itinerary and seminar key concepts will be discussed, including map reading and the use of a compass, as well as what to expect to pack for the field each day.

The goals for the course include:

- To show you how to read and interpret a U.S. Geological Survey topographical map
- To teach you all the key features of a good compass
- To explain the desired features to look for in selecting a compass for purchase
- To show you how to set a compass bearing
- To demonstrate how to follow a compass bearing in the field
- To use our map and compass skills to locate several backcountry sites, such as lakes, streams, and viewpoints.
- To demonstrate proper clothing, tents, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, cook stoves and backpacks.
- To demonstrate how to properly hike and camp in bear country
- How to be a "leave no trace" hiker, backpacker and camper
- How to properly utilize a campfire where permitted
- How to prepare convenient meals

### Day 2

You will put to use our map reading and compass skills by running some off trail courses to some beautiful and wild backcountry destinations. This will be the longest day, travelling about 8-10 miles and climbing about 800 feet, weather permitting. Along the way your instructors will stop to interpret some of the fascinating human and natural history all around. Hopefully there will be some wildlife but most assuredly there will be some incredible wildflower displays.

You will return to the Buffalo Ranch and after dinner gather at the firepit to spin some hair-raising tales of adventures and misadventures in the Yellowstone wilderness. Your instructors have had many but they will enjoy your stories as well!

### Day 3

On our last day you will hike cross country to a small lake and on this site your instructors will demonstrate how to set up camp in bear country. They will discuss in detail topics such as proper gear—clothing, tents, backpacks, cook stoves, etc. Your ca

### Day 4

#### Check-Out

Check out of cabins by 9:00 a.m.

## PROGRAM EQUIPMENT

For a full list of what is included in this course, in addition to recommended equipment check out the [Lamar Buffalo Ranch - Summer General Information](#) document.

## RECOMMENDED READING

There are books and reference materials at the ranch for the class to enjoy during the stay. In addition to those materials, the following recommended readings are not required but may enhance the visit.

- National Park Service. *2023 Resource and Issues Handbook*. NPS, 2023.

## WHOM TO CONTACT

**For any questions, concerns, or additional information please contact the following:**

- Program itinerary, health forms, payment, and general program questions please contact Yellowstone Forever at [institute@yellowstone.org](mailto:institute@yellowstone.org) or 406-848-2400
- Road updates, park conditions, and general park information please contact Yellowstone National Park Service at <https://www.nps.gov/yell/contacts.htm>
- If running late for a program, please contact 406-848-2400.